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## REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTICES.

An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language, arranged on an Historical Basis. By the REV. WALTER W. SKEAT, M. A. Part II. Dor—Lit. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press.

Until within the last dozen years, English etymology has scarcely deserved the name of a science. The dictionaries of Johnson and Richardson, though treasure-houses of definition and illustration concerning later usage, could furnish but little accurate information about the history of early forms and that physical basis, so to speak, upon which the most spiritual conceptions have been superimposed, or out of which they have been evolved. The same holds of their rivals and successors, almost without exception, till the present day. Those who have undertaken the difficult task have rarely possessed special knowledge and freedom from prejudice at the same time. Ignorance and perverse wrongheadedness, singly or combined, have succeeded in vitiating the most promising attempts, even of individuals who seemed to possess special aptitude for the prosecution of these researches. Yet in the chaos of opinions and results some germs of order have been perceptible. From the days of Horne Tooke onward there has been a gradual accumulation and sifting of material for such a work as now lies before us; German scholarship has discovered and expounded phonetic laws; scientific knowledge of the Teutonic dialects, both ancient and modern, has been attained; Celtic, though still but imperfectly understood, has begun to reward the assiduity of a few devotees; finally, the provincial and archaic English words, which a variety of circumstances had combined to degrade and obscure, have commenced to reassert themselves, and to cast their light upon forms of literary expression.

All this while hazardous conjectures have been made only to be rejected with the advance of scholarship, and etymology after etymology has been imagined which the logic of hard facts has nullified. It is too soon to expect such reckless guessing to cease; ingenious sciolism will still find scope for its energies, and credence for its fanciful deductions.

Prof. Skeat's dictionary, while hardly definitive, even for the present generation, will set a term to much of the vague theorizing which is yet current, and indicate to future investigators the track to be pursued. Heretofore we have had only one work which challenged serious attention through the number and accuracy of its derivations. The great dictionary which passes under the name of Webster possesses a large amount of fairly trustworthy information about etymology, furnished for the most part by the indefatigable German scholar, Dr. Mahn, of Berlin. Everything may be granted which its admirers would claim for Webster, without in the least invalidating the title of Prof. Skeat's book to higher consideration as a strictly etymological dictionary. More it does not pretend to be, and indeed its definitions are meagre and often

couched in the loosest terms, while the illustrative quotations are reduced to a minimum. On the other hand, no labor has been spared to perfect it within the limits assigned. The best authorities have been consulted, and great pains taken to substantiate the etymologies adduced. The historic ordering of the material is admirable, and constitutes the main novelty of Skeat's work, as it will form one of the most valuable features of the Philological Society's stupendous English Dictionary. The utmost perspicuity is attained by the use of algebraic signs to indicate, on the one hand the direct or successive generation of forms, and on the other mere side relationship or remote cognation. Some such method of discrimination between the original of a word and its kin at several removes has long been a desideratum.

Prof. Skeat is cautious about admitting Anglo-Saxon radicals when unsupported by evidence of their actual occurrence in the literature. He has been censured for omitting words which really exist, but this is safer and more laudable than to give the weight of his sanction to the spurious coin uttered by some of his predecessors.

Where he has to deal with phonetic laws Prof. Skeat is not always sure of his footing. Especially is he unguarded and often obscure in his use of the terms 'strong' and 'weak.' For example, under the word *jaw* he says: "The spelling *joue* may have been suggested by the F. *joue*, a cheek; still, it is certain that the F. word is not original, since *chaw* and *jaw* are stronger forms than *joue*, and could never have come out of it." Under *jabber* we have: "*Jabber, jabble*, are weakened forms of *gabber, gabble*, frequentative forms of the base *gab*." Under *grate*: "Thus *grate* is a mere variant of *crate*, due to a weakened pronunciation." Under *imbue*: "Lat. *im-*, for *in-*, in; and base BU, weakened form of PU, which is the causal from the base BI, to drink, weakened form of PI, to drink." This last quotation likewise shows Skeat's fondness for going back to primitive Aryan roots, and generally for pushing his inquiries so far that none but a scholar of equal attainments can follow and comprehend him. Thus in the discussion of the word *fur* he asserts that *fur* and *fodder* are doublets, *i. e.* different forms of the same word; even with his explanation the connection will be but dimly apprehended by many who will consult his pages.

Of *flat* he says: "The connection with Gk. *πλατύς*, broad, has not been made out; it is more likely connected with Du. *vlack*, G. *flach*, flat, Gk. *πλάξ*, a flat surface." Grassmann, in Kuhn's Zeitschrift XII 107, is for the identification of *flat* with Gk. *πλατύς*, and strengthens his position as regards phonetic change by a comparison of Gk. *πλαθύνω*. Fick, likewise, Wbch. VII 194, adduces *πλάθανον* in connection with *flat*. It is rather *flag* that should be compared with Gk. *πλάξ*, as Weigand has shown s. v. *Flagge* in his Deutsches Wörterbuch.

Under the word *gnat* Prof. Skeat remarks that Swed. *gnet* means 'a nit'; "this suggests a possible connection between the two words; yet the A. S. form is *hnit*, which does not seem to be quite the same thing." That is, A. S. *gnat* and A. S. *hnit* do not seem to be quite the same thing, in which conclusion we readily acquiesce.

For Prof. Skeat when at his worst, when most defiant of regular and progressive sound-change, it is only necessary to refer to his treatment of the word *inkling*.

Occasionally, though the phenomenon under consideration be admitted, the

example chosen to support it is unfortunate. Thus under *flatter* Skeat says: "Here, as in many cases (*e. g.* *mate* from A. S. *maca*) the *t* stands for an older *k*." But *mate* does not come from A. S. *maca*. Mätzner, Eng. Gram. I 204, derives *mate* from Netherl. *maet*, and *match* from A. S. *maca*. In like manner Stratmann, Dict. of the Old Eng. Lang., parallels *mate* with O. H. G. *gimazo*; with these two authorities Dr. Mahn also agrees. Diez's etymology for the O. F. *flater*, though rejected by Skeat, has much in its favor, and is far more than plausible.

Under *gate* two distinct words are confounded. Stratmann distinguishes the one meaning 'gait, road,' from the other meaning 'door, passage-way.' Cleasby and Vigfusson, Icelandic Dictionary, also separate the first, as *gata*, from the second, *gátt*. So too in deriving *foil* from O. F. *fouler*, Skeat has confounded two essentially different words. He says: "Corrupted from O. F. *fouler*, just as *defile* from *defouler*." In the glossary to his Altenglische Sprachproben, s. v. *defouler*, Mätzner expressly gives it as his opinion that "Dies hybrid. v. weist auf *fulen*, *foulen*, *filen*, sch. *defoul*, neue. *defile*, besudeln, beflecken," and assigns to another *defoulen*, *defoilen*, from O. F. *defuler*, *defoler*, *deffouler*, the meaning "mit Füßen treten, zertreten, niedertreten," and metaphorically, "bewältigen, unterdrücken."

*Flask* and *flagon* are not traced back far enough. Diez, s. v. *Fiasco*, Etym. Wbch. der Roman. Spr., p. 178, quotes Greg. M. Dial. 2, 18: *duo lignea vascula, quae vulgo flascones vocantur*, and proceeds to establish the derivation as follows: "Wie durch umstellung des *l* ital. *fiaba* (für *flaba*) aus *fabula*, *pioppo* aus *populus*, sp. *bloca* aus *baculus*, pr. *floronc* aus *furunculus* geformt wurden, ebenso *fiasco* aus *vasculum*, mit einer härtung des *v* zu *f*, die hier nicht ausbleiben konnte. *Vasculum* erschöpft alle bedeutungen des rom. oder celt. wortes, es ist gefäsz im weitesten sinne."

*Dowager* is called "a coined word, made by suffixing *r* (for-*er*) to *dowage*." But Littré, s. v. *douairière*, quotes from Du Cange, Gloss. Med. et Infim. Lat., who under *Doageria* has the following from a Charta of A. D. 1388: "Après la mort desquelx Marie de Monceaux, femme dudit Hebert, comme Douagiare (almost certainly for *Douagiere*) a joy et usé par long temps de laditte terre." *Douagère* is also to be found in the Complément to the Academy's French Dictionary, with a reference to *Douairière*.

Skeat has scarcely hit upon the right explanation of *how* (1). March has already shown, Gram. §252, II, that *hu* stands for earlier *hwi*, and that *how* and *why* are therefore doublets, and ultimately identical.

Under *icicle*, Skeat would make *gicel* Celtic. He perceives that Icel. *jökull* has the meaning of Eng. *icicle*, but is inclined to think that *jökull* itself may be borrowed from the Celtic.

*Gossip*: *Sib* with the meaning 'relative' is A. S. Cf. Grein's Sprachschatz, II 441. *Gesib* is used more frequently, however, in this sense.

*Gulf*: Skeat appears to have forgotten that *gulf* is used as the equivalent of *gullet* by Shakespeare, Macb. IV, 1, 23. Cf. also Lucr. 557, Cor. I, 1, 101.

*Fleet* (2): Not "a place where vessels float"; rather like Ger. *Flusz*, 'flowing water.'

*Ladle*: *Hladel* is found, according to Leo, in Hpt. Gl. 418, with the meaning 'antlia,' which, though not the equivalent of Eng. *ladle*, is not very far off.

*Dwarf*: How is A. S. *dwellan* suggestive? Certainly it would be hard to show any relationship between the two words.

*Ease*: Why not from A. S. *æðe*? So Mätzner, Eng. Gram. I 145, and Grimm, Gesch. der d. Sprache 352. Of course the form *ease* is due to French influence, which has reshaped the original word.

By a singular oversight Skeat calls *eld* an obsolete word. The poets still use it, at all events. Thus Byron, Childe Harold, I 93:

"Lands that contain the monuments of Eld."

Longfellow, Prelude to Voices of the Night:

"Tales that have the rime of age  
And chronicles of eld."

William Morris, The Earthly Paradise, May:

"And shuddered at the sight of Eld and Death."

Even as 'old man' in Coleridge, The Destiny of Nations:

"To the tottering eld  
Still as a daughter would she run; she placed  
His cold limbs at the sunny door."

Prof. Skeat is ready to ascribe somewhat too much influence to the Celtic, we think, going to the extent, as under the word *icicle*, of supposing that an Icelandic word was borrowed directly from Old Irish or Welsh. Again, he is inclined to derive English words quite too frequently from the modern Scandinavian or North German languages. As one example out of many, the word *douse* may be cited. Direct derivation from the Swedish is hardly to be thought of in such a case. It might be objected, moreover, that he shows too marked a leaning toward the onomatopoeic theory of which Wedgwood is one of the foremost expounders.

But we have no desire to indulge in carping criticism, for, while many disputed points remain to be settled, and while it is certain that some of Prof. Skeat's positions will prove untenable, his dictionary can only be received with the acknowledgment that it displays great learning, conscientiousness and skill on the part of the editor, and that it is indispensable to all who concern themselves with the history of the English language.

ALBERT S. COOK.

Introduction to the Study of Sign-Language among the North American Indians as illustrating the Gesture-Speech of Mankind. By GARRICK MALLERY, Brevet Lieut.-Col. U. S. Army. Washington: Government Printing Office. 1880.

In this book, which is issued by the Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution, we have the first attempt in this country to treat sign-language scientifically; the author, aware of the extent of the subject, modestly calls it